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7

CATECHISING ;

AN

ESSENTIAL PART OF THE EVENING SERVICE

ON

SUNDAYS AND HOLYDAYS.

A Sermon,

PREACHED AT WARE, ON MONDAY, JUNE 12TH, 1843, AT THE
VISITATION OF THE VENERABLE THE ARCHDEACON
OF MIDDLESEX,

AND PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE ARCHDEACON
AND CLERGY ASSEMBLED.

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RECTOR OF GILSTON.

LONDON:
RIVINGTONS; DARTON AND CLARK.

Price 6d. each, or 5s. a Dozen.

Most of the authorities quoted in this Sermon may be found, with references, in a valuable "SERIES OF DOCUMENTS AND AUTHORITIES ON THE DUTY, ADVANTAGE, AND NECESSITY OF PUBLIC CATECHISING IN THE CHURCH." By the REV. JOHN LEY, M.A. (*Burns.*)

LONDON:
H. W. MARTIN, 19, CURSITOR STREET, CHANCERY LANE.

CATECHISING ;

ETC.

In the Church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.—I COR. ch. xiv. v. 19.

THERE is a cheerfulness about the formularies of the Church, that serves at times, rather, to make one melancholy. They are all so full of hope—of confidence—nay, of assurance. We may well be almost afraid to take the words upon our lips ; for instance, to say to Almighty God, that “we most heartily thank him for assuring us, that we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of his Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people, and also heirs through hope of his everlasting kingdom.”

And this is the more striking in the occasional offices in which we speak of others, and that too, individually. In the case of every child brought to the holy font we exhort the congregation “not to doubt, but earnestly believe, that our blessed Redeemer will favourably receive this present infant, that he will embrace him with the arms of his mercy, that he will give unto him the blessing of eternal life, and make him partaker of his everlasting kingdom.” Every such child we teach,

so soon as he is able to learn, to call himself “a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.” In the case of all young persons brought to confirmation, the Bishop, after thanking God for having regenerated them, and given them the forgiveness of their sins, lays his hand upon the head of every one of them severally. Every sick member, after making, when requisite, a special confession of his sins, if he humbly and heartily desire it, shall be absolved by the priest of all his sins. At the burial of the dead, we always “give God hearty thanks for that it hath pleased him to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world;” and we pray, “that when we shall depart this life, we may rest in Christ, as our hope is, this our brother doth.”—Always hope, always confidence.

Now in all this we are told, and I believe truly, that there is a certain amount of assumption. The Church assumes the sincerity of every worshipper; as indeed must be done, or no two persons could pray together. But, let it be observed, she never assumes any thing, except in connexion with the use of certain means. Her cheerfulness is merely the confidence of good results from the use of appointed means;—the cheerfulness of holy faith, that when man is faithful to his duties God will be faithful to his promises. The means neglected, this confidence is no longer faith, but presumption. Now, as regards others, charity requires that we should assume too,—that they are, and are doing, what they profess to be and to



be doing. As to ourselves, however, it must be, not assumption, but reality; and least of all, my reverend brethren, should there be any assumption with respect to us.

No wonder, too, that I have little comfort in using our mother's words of hope, if I am neglecting the simple means which those words assume me to have employed. I may think that Abana and Pharpar are better than all the waters of Jordan; I may be doing great things in my own way, but I ought not to be surprised if I miss the comfort and the blessing laid in the way of those who walk on steadily in the path of duty and obedience. It is of importance, then, whatever else we may do or leave undone, that we omit no part, however small, of the means prescribed by the Church, or rather assumed to have been employed in the case of every individual, of whose state here and prospects hereafter, we are made to speak with such confidence. To the humble and obedient it is most encouraging to find that there is a provision made, (and the more minute the detail the more satisfactory), for the training of every such member of Christ's body from earliest infancy—from the cradle to the dying bed.

To keep, however, this discourse within due bounds, we will limit ourselves to the years previous to confirmation, and, as is not unbefitting the occasion on which we are assembled, chiefly, though by no means exclusively, to the duty of the clergy.

And here the preacher may be allowed in pass-

ing to express his delight, that he is about to speak entirely upon points of practice, and, for the most part, in the words of the Church. At the same time, that he may not be thought to attach undue importance to his subject,—namely, the duty of bringing each individual parishioner from his earliest days into immediate contact with his spiritual teacher and guide,—even should he dwell upon it as the very ground-work of our Church system, he is glad at the outset to fortify himself with the words of the present Primate of all England.—“The allegiance you owe to the Church,” says his Grace, in a charge delivered when Bishop of this diocese, “obliges you, in every particular of your professional conduct, to look to her for direction. . . . Her wisdom indeed might of itself command our attention, though her authority were less. In her Canons, which are a body of laws for the general regulation of her discipline, we find many directions of the greatest importance, which ought to be familiar to the parish priest. Her liturgical formularies not only supply a collection of prayers, instructions, and offices adapted to all the solemnities of religious worship, to the exigencies of every age and every condition, to the uses of every day, to all the contingencies of life ; but virtually establish a system of parochial discipline, conceived on an accurate notion of the relation between the pastor and his flock, designed to connect them by a regular intercourse, and to direct the conduct of both parties in the performance of their respective duties. *As the ground-work of*

this plan, it is her peculiar object to bring the parishioner from his earliest days into immediate contact with his spiritual teacher and guide. In the tenour of the rubrics annexed to the catechism, and the offices of baptism and confirmation, compared with the several canons relating to the same points, we have connected indications of this design. Whether we look to the dedication of the infant to God by the ministry of the priest, to the promise of faith and obedience, which is made in his presence by the sponsors, or to the exhortation which designates their duties, and specifies the instruction to be given to the child,—we discern the pervading intention of placing the rising generation in the view of the minister, of giving them in the tenderest infancy the advantage of his paternal protection, and sending them to the Church to be publicly instructed by him in faith and morals, till he is so well satisfied with their proficiency as to recommend them for confirmation to the Bishop.”

My task then is an easy one, and our duty a plain one. God Almighty grant, that every child committed to our care may henceforth enjoy the full benefit of the Church’s provision for it ! That there may be no mere assumption as to our employment of the means of bringing about the assumed result !

It is then expressly provided, that on the first or second Sunday next after the birth of a child, or other holyday falling between, the child, unless upon great cause and necessity, shall be brought

publicly to the holy font, which is then to be filled with pure water ; and immediately after the last lesson at morning or evening prayer, be publicly baptized. It is assumed that the infant has the advantage of the prayers of the congregation. Let us at least afford the opportunity, and admonish and exhort to the performance of the duty. Let all due honour be paid to Christ's holy sacrament of regeneration.

It is provided, too, that the child shall have three sponsors, each and all of whom shall be communicants. But, it may be objected, communicants cannot be procured in sufficient number. And no wonder, if, by any omission or practices on our part, the people have been generally allowed to attach comparatively little importance to the holy sacrament of Christ's body and blood. The Church assumes that the people have been not only taught, but in a variety of ways led to feel, that this sacrament, as well as the other, is necessary to salvation. She assumes, indeed, that on every Sunday and holyday the grand object for which we assemble together in God's house is to break bread ; that, on every such day, as far as I can understand her rubrics, which are meant to be plain directions, if only there be a convenient number to communicate with the priest, there takes place a celebration of the Lord's supper ; that it is the constant endeavour of the minister to bring every individual in his parish, above the age of sixteen, to the holy table, thrice a year at the least. At all events she assumes, that all is said

and done that is appointed at the communion, without change or omission ; the effect of which would doubtless be to remind every individual present, that she regards this sacrament as a necessary duty—necessary indeed to salvation.

But even, as things are, might not more be done than is done in the way of advising with the parents as to the choice of sponsors? Is there not too much distinction of rank kept up in these matters? Why should not a rich communicant stand occasionally for the child of a poor dependant or neighbour. A standing admonition, as is done in some parishes, might be given to the sponsors in the shape of a book or card. It is assumed, indeed, that all parents and sponsors are from time to time publicly admonished of their duties ; namely, whenever a child is brought to holy baptism ; and that each child has a godfather or godmother as a witness of his confirmation.

As soon as the child is able to learn, there is provision made that he shall be taught, what a solemn vow, promise, and profession, he has made by his sponsors. A catechism is provided, that is to say, an instruction to be learned of every person before he be brought to be confirmed by the bishop. With whom the responsibility rests of seeing that this instruction is given and understood and learned, or rather of giving it, is plain enough from the Rubrics. Let us read them :—

“ The Curate of every parish shall diligently upon Sundays and Holydays, after the Second Lesson at Evening Prayer, openly in the Church instruct

and examine so many children of his parish sent unto him, as he shall think convenient, in some part of this catechism.

“And all Fathers, Mothers, Masters, and Dames, shall cause their Children, Servants, and Apprentices (who have not learned their catechism), to come to the Church at the time appointed, and diligently to hear and be ordered by the Curate, until such time as they have learned all that is here appointed for them to learn.”

The Church then assumes, that every baptized child is duly catechised by the clergyman of the parish. To impress, brethren, upon your mind and my own, the duty and importance of catechising, is the main object of this discourse.

And first, as in duty bound, let us appeal to God's holy book. The word and the practice are alike scriptural. The stress laid upon it by the great Apostle of the Gentiles is manifest from the text. Much as he valued spiritual gifts, and though he could thank God that he spoke with tongues more than all those whom he was addressing, “Yet in the Church,” he says, “I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might catechise others (ἵνα καὶ ἄλλους κατηχησω) than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.” The exact method of this catechetical instruction it is not for one of small research like myself to offer to explain. It is evident, however, that it was simple oral instruction, and rather in the form of teaching than of preaching. St. Cyril, indeed, expressly states, that St. Paul

preached the Gospel from Jerusalem to Illyria, and taught at Rome by catechising. And if we may appeal to Clement of Alexandria for the precise meaning of the term, it signifies “the knowledge of religion first delivered to the ignorant by the catechist, and then by them repeated over and over again; the catechist being said to instruct by making the elements of Christian doctrine resound (*κατηχηεῖν*) in the ears of his students, and the catechumen being said to be taught by repeating the words addressed to him and by answering questions.” Thus when Theophilus, of whom St. Luke testifies, is said to have been instructed in Christianity, the original word is “catechised.” When Apollos, of whom we read the high commendation, that he was mighty in the Scriptures, is said to have been “instructed in the way of the Lord”—again, the word is “catechised.” In the Epistle to the Galatians mention is made of the two parties together, “Let him that is catechised in the word, communicate unto him that catechises in all good things.”

“It was principally by catechising,” says Hegesippus in his Ecclesiastical History, “that the religion of Jesus was in a few years spread over the known world,” so that Julian the Apostate, the greatest enemy that Christians ever had, found no speedier way to root out the Christian religion than by suppressing places of catechising. Clemens Alexandrinus, Heraclas, and Origen were catechists, and the latter was so eminently successful in proceeding upon the golden rule, “line

upon line, and precept upon precept," that he not only achieved conversions among the more ignorant and uninformed, but among accomplished scholars. — "And when," says bishop Andrews, "catechising was left off in the Church, it soon became darkened and overspread with ignorance. The Papists acknowledge" he continues, "that all the advantage which the Protestants have gotten of them hath come by this exercise; and, it is to be feared, that if ever they get ground of us, it will be by their more exact and frequent catechising than ours."

It was indeed a frequent boast of our Reformers, that they had restored the old way of giving instruction; and grievously did good bishop Ridley, at the beginning of Queen Mary's reign, lament this loss of the catechism.—"O devilish malice, and most spitefully injurious to the salvation of mankind purchased by Jesus Christ! Indeed Satan could not long suffer that so great light should be spread abroad in the world. He saw well enough, that nothing was able to overthrow his kingdom so much as if children, being godly instructed in religion, should learn to know Christ while they are young. Now, therefore, he roareth,—now he rageth." The Council of Trent bear strong though reluctant testimony to the point, in saying, "The age is sadly sensible what mischief they (the Protestants) have done the Church of Rome, not only by their tongues, but especially by their writings, called catechisms." And when there began to be a falling off among

ourselves we find Archbishop Whitgift issuing a letter upon the subject, in which he says, "This mischief might well be redressed, if that which in this behalf has been wisely and godly provided were as carefully called on and executed, namely, by catechising and instructing in churches youth of both sexes, on the sabbath days and holydays in afternoons, and that before their parents and others of the several parishes, who thereby may take comfort and instruction also.....I am very sorry," he proceeds, "to hear that my brethren, the bishops of my province of Canterbury, do so generally begin to neglect to call for and exact the catechising of children in the Church by the minister, and of parents to send thither their children and to come thither themselves. I am, therefore, in conscience urged very earnestly, and in the fear of God, to require your lordship and others my brethren the bishops, according to your pastoral care and for the duty which you owe to God and his Church, both in your visitations from time to time, and by your archdeacons and other ecclesiastical officers to give straight charge.....especially unto ministers, to expound and to examine the children in that little catechism which is allowed by authority."

In the next generation we find King James the First, in a letter to Archbishop Abbot concerning preachers, enjoining, "That no parson, vicar, or lecturer, shall preach any sermon hereafter upon Sundays and holydays in the afternoon in any cathedral or parish church throughout this

kingdom, but upon some part of the catechism, or some text taken out of the creed, ten commandments, or the Lord's prayer, (funeral sermons only excepted); and that those preachers be most encouraged and approved of, who spend the afternoon's exercise in the examining of children in their catechism, and in the expounding of the several points and heads thereof, which is the most ancient and laudable custom of teaching in the Church of England."

As troublesome times came on, we have the heads of the Church insisting with increased earnestness upon the same point; *e.g.* King Charles the First, of blessed memory, in his instructions to Archbishop Laud, requiring "that in all parishes the afternoon sermons be turned into catechising by questions and answers, where and whensoever there is not some great cause apparent to break this ancient and laudable order."

And when matters came to the worst, in the overthrow both of Church and State, we find John Evelyn entering in his diary, "On Sunday afternoon I frequently stayed at home to catechise and instruct my family, those exercises universally ceasing in the parish churches; so as people had no principles, and grew very ignorant of even the common points of Christianity, all devotion being now placed in hearing sermons and discourses of speculative and notional things."

The extent of the mischief, however, is perhaps best shewn in the royal directions after the restoration, addressed to Archbishop Juxon res-

pecting preachers :—" That for the more edifying of the people in faith and godliness, (the afore-said abuses laid aside), all ministers and preachers, in their several respective cures, shall not only diligently apply themselves to catechise the younger sort, according as in the book of Common Prayer is appointed, but also shall, in their ordinary sermon insist chiefly upon catechetical doctrines, (wherein are contained all the necessary and undoubted verities of Christian religion), declaring withal unto their congregations, what influences such doctrines ought to have in their lives and conversations ; and stirring them up effectually, as well by their examples as their doctrines, to the practice of such religious and moral duties as are the proper results of the said doctrines—as self-denial, contempt of the world, humility, patience, meekness, temperance, justice, mercy, obedience, and the like ! and to a detestation and shunning of sin, especially such sins as are ripe among us, and common to the age we live in ;—such are those usually styled the seven deadly ones : in short, all kinds of debauchery, sensuality, rebellion, profaneness, atheism, and the like. And because these licentious times have corrupted religion even in the very roots and foundations, that, where there is an afternoon's exercise, it be especially spent either in explaining some part of the Church catechism, or in preaching upon some such text of Scripture as will properly and naturally lead to the handling of something contained in it, or may conduce to the exposition of the

liturgy and prayers of the Church ; the only cause they grew into contempt among the people being this, that they were not understood." So strongly indeed was the subject felt a few years afterwards, that in a letter of Archbishop Selden's, concerning the increase of sects, addressed to his suffragans, he requires them by themselves and officers to reinforce the execution of such laws and constitutions as enjoin the use and exercise of the said catechism. And it appears from the Common's Journal, that in the same month the Attorney-general was desired to prepare a bill, "enjoining all persons possessed of ecclesiastical preferment, *under penalty*, to catechise and instruct the youth every Sunday in the afternoon, in the Church catechism, and to explain the same, and expound thereupon to the congregation."

If time would permit, it would be an interesting and not unprofitable exercise to continue the series down to the present age. The whole, however, may be summed up in the few but emphatic words of Bishop Jebb :—"It is observable, that in exact proportion as catechising has been practised, the public morals have been seen to flourish or decline. . . . And it is not too much to say, that next to an established liturgy, and beyond all prescribed confessions of faith, the single ordinance of catechetical instruction has been the great stay and support throughout Christendom of orthodox unwavering Catholicity."

But what could show the importance attached by our own Church to this practice more strongly

than the simple fact, that in her 59th canon, she pronounces her severest penalty against the neglect of it:—"If any minister neglect his duty herein, viz., in catechising in Church on every Sunday and holyday, let him be sharply reproved upon the first complaint..... If, after submitting himself, he shall willingly offend therein again, let him be suspended; if so, the third time.... then excommunicated, and so remain until he reform."

The following points, then, may, I trust, be considered as established:—

That it is an essential part of our Church system that every baptized child, rich or poor, gentle or simple, shall be instructed in the faith and duty of a Christian, and that in the catechetical method. "Ye shall call upon him to hear sermons, but chiefly ye shall provide that he *learn*.... all those things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health." And in all the subsequent offices of the Church, (*e. g.*, confirmation,) this is assumed to have been done; not in a hurried, perfunctory manner, but regularly and systematically, as forming indeed, along with holy baptism, the ground-work of all that follows.

That by catechising is meant, not a mere parrot-like repetition of a form of words, but a course of oral instruction in the form of question and answer—"by asking questions and correcting the answers."

At the same time the shorter catechism is to be the text-book and the model. "The country parson," says the saintly Herbert, "useth and preferreth the ordinary church catechism, partly for obedience to authority, partly for uniformity sake, that the same common truths may be everywhere professed, especially since many remove from parish to parish, who, like Christian soldiers, are to give the word, and to satisfy the congregation, by their catholic answers."

It is to be the text-book for both teachers and scholars, not only as keeping within certain bounds, but also as ensuring a complete body of divinity as far as it reaches; fixed limits, but still a wide range. It may be said of it, indeed, as Gregory the Great said of Holy Scripture, "There are places in it where a man may wade, and others where an elephant must swim."

It is also intended as a model—a model of living instruction, as distinguished from a mere form of words. Herein consists its peculiar excellence. It takes a child as a living being, with hopes and fears, with likings and dislikings, with wants and desires. It speaks, not to the head, but to the heart, or rather to the child—the living individual child. It has to do less with light than with life. This peculiarity, which of course is in strict keeping with all the rest of our scheme, and marks it at once as an integral part thereof, will be seen at a glance by comparing it with other formularies of the kind, e. g. with the Assembly's Catechism, which is excellent in its way.

But how great the difference ! The one a hard, dry, formal thing ; the other all life and love. The one asks, "What are the decrees of God ?" "What is justification?" "What is adoption?" The other takes the child by the hand as a fellow-member in Christ, and asks, "Dost thou not think that thou art bound to believe and to do, as thy godfathers and godmothers promised for thee at thy baptism, when, as thou hast just been saying, such great things were done for thee?" And oh ! what a living answer is elicited !

Our holy mother does not at once (as we sometimes hear the catechism marred and spoiled), bid the child *say* the Lord's Prayer ; but having led him to understand and realize his baptismal privileges and engagements, addresses him pointedly and individually,—“ My good child, know this, that thou art not able to do these things of thyself, nor to walk in the commandments of God, and to serve him, without his special grace, which thou must learn at all times to call for by diligent prayer ; let me hear, therefore, if thou canst say the Lord's Prayer?” And then, not, What is the meaning of this ? but, “What desirest thou of God in this prayer?”

But, while the catechism is both the text-book and a model, it is evidently intended that continual reference should be made to the Liturgy and all the offices of the Church. In this way her distinctive features, the authority and constitution of her ministry, the nature and value of her sacraments, the admirable arrangement of the Chris-

tian year, the order of her daily and other services, her solemn ceremonies, the pleasures of the temple, the beauty of her buildings, the sweetness of her songs, the decency of her ministrations,—may be made familiar to the children, and engaging to their hearts. The relation of the parts may be shewn, and the agreement of the whole.”*

It is provided, too, that this instruction shall be given by the minister himself. Lay helpers, brethren, are invaluable; but we find no warrant for lay proxies. There is ample employment for all the helpers we can muster. The Sunday-school teacher or the schoolmaster will not be superseded; but their hearts will be encouraged, and their hands strengthened tenfold, when the curate of every parish himself instructs and examines on each Lord’s day a certain portion of their scholars. When at our first ordination, my reverend brethren, the Bishop admonished us, that it appertaineth to our office to instruct the youth in the catechism, and put to us the pointed question, Will you do this gladly and willingly? our answer was, “I will do so, by the help of God.” *The minister is the authorized teacher.* If the work is done by another (though in many cases, if not done by the clergyman, it is altogether left undone); but even if done by another, a principal object is frustrated. Here I am glad to be able to quote the words of our own Diocesan:—

“The general disuse,” he says, “into which

* Abridged from “The Church’s Care for Little Children.”
A Charge by the Right Rev. the Bishop of New Jersey.

this practice has fallen, I consider as calamitous to the interests of piety in the highest degree, not only by removing one of the strongest incitements to the parents to teach, and to the children to learn, the doctrines and laws of their Christian profession ; but still more by its frustrating the purpose which it was the principal object of the ordinances to attain. If, at the age when the mind is susceptible of the strongest impressions, the young are regularly brought into personal intercourse with their minister, and accustomed to receive their instruction from his lips, they will naturally imbibe a respect for his person, and a reverence to the sacred character of his office, which will prove the strongest of barriers against immorality and vice, as well as dissent and infidelity. They will regard with deep veneration the truths which they have received upon his authority, and will feel, what reasoning can hardly make clear to the ignorant, the danger, no less of guilt than of error, in deserting the appointed guide of their youth for intrusive and unknown teachers."

Again, it is expressly ordered, that this instruction be given in the Church. I am one of the last men to decry the school-room ; but the appointed place for this portion of ministerial instruction is the Church. I am not unaware, that at present the great battle of the Church is to be fought in the school-room ; but still, it is the highest glory of the school to be a nursery for the Church. Much preparatory work, e. g., the study

of history and other matters, and especially of language, ought to be done in the former place ; but when the curate instructs and examines in the fundamentals of religion as a part of his ministerial office, let it be done in God's own house. Great, indeed, will be the gain in the way of reverence, which, after all, is at least as important as knowledge.

Again, it is ordered to be done "openly in the Church,"—in the service—"after the second lesson at evening prayer." To do it before the service or after the service is to depreciate it, and to put its light under a bushel, when it should be set up in the candlestick, and give light to all that are in the house. The Church assumes, that it is not done in a corner.

Another point of importance is, that it be done diligently upon Sundays and holydays—regularly and systematically, as an integral part of the evening service :—Not merely as an occasional thing, —in Lent, or summer, or previous to a confirmation. Surely we have all had experience enough of the difficulties of preparing young persons for that apostolic ordinance, to be feelingly persuaded that there is a want somewhere. And what better remedy can there be than the revival of the scheme of catechising on every Sunday and holiday, as by the Church prescribed, and assumed to be practised. Besides, it is a well known prudential maxim, that what may be done at any time, is in great danger of being altogether left undone.

Once more, brethren, and upon this, I believe,

hinges the success of the whole scheme,—catechising should take the place of a second sermon. Evident, however, as is the mind of the Church upon this point, I should scarcely have been so bold as to advance it, had I not the full authority of our own diocesan, in his primary charge. His words are:—"In most country parishes, a catechetical examination of young persons, interspersed with judicious illustrations and remarks, will be of greater benefit to the congregation than a second sermon."

It is far from my wish to depreciate the ordinance of preaching; but catechising is preaching. Of the three kinds of preaching, viz., catechising, expounding, and preaching, commonly so called, that is, a set discourse or sermon, the last is of the least importance, and the first is of the greatest. But why should there be any rivalry? The Church would have the two advance "*pari passu*." She regards the sermon as an integral, though by no means the chief part, of the communion-service on Sundays and holydays. And whenever there is a sermon in the morning, it is her will that there should be catechising in the evening. There would indeed be no rivalry, but like two mirrors, arranged for the purpose, each would reflect light upon the other; not but that the sermon would be the greater gainer of the two.

"Let us preach," says Archbishop Usher, "never so many sermons unto the people, our labour is but lost so long as the foundation is unlaid, and the first principles untaught, upon which

all other doctrine must be builded.....Consider, that the laying the foundation skilfully, as it is the matter of greatest importance in the whole building, so it is the very master-piece of the wisest builder. ‘According to the grace of God which is given unto me,’ saith the great Apostle, I have laid the foundation.”

As to the children themselves, no one, I suppose, will deny the superior value of catechising to a second sermon. And only call to mind how large a proportion of the flock the lambs are. And shall we, to gratify the sheep, neglect the lambs? The good shepherd gathers them in his arms. And are we not as expressly commanded to feed them as the sheep? Nay, rather in the first place, —“*Feed my lambs.*”

But to meet at once the only two objections of moment that have ever reached my ears.

One is, that it would be less profitable to the adult portion of the congregation. No: nor would it be, if well managed, less popular. To every one, young or old, that “occupieth the room of the unlearned,” it would be instructive; to all it would be a pleasing and useful variety. How many of our people have all the ignorance of children without their teachableness. Our sermons are above their heads. A continuous connected discourse is lost upon them. They require “line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little there a little.” Divine knowledge must be instilled into them drop by drop. Happy would it be if we could catechise them. The next best plan for ar-

resting their attention and communicating some little knowledge to them, is to question children in their presence. Think you, that a mother will not listen to catch her child's reply, and mentally answer, or try to answer, each question herself? The very exercise is itself a variety. And let us never forget, that though the words of the catechism are for children to repeat, they are meant for men and women to put in practice. Nor let it be said, there must needs be a great sameness. Far from it: we are obliged to use great variety of illustration to make the matter plain to children; and, after all, there is a variety and fulness of doctrine even in the catechism itself, though it has only to do with fundamentals, which a man might preach a thousand sermons without exhausting. As catechising makes sure work with the attention and understanding of the catechumen, so it makes close work with the doctrine of the catechiser. He must find some meaning for such terms as, The Holy Catholic Church, The Communion of Saints. That the sacraments are generally necessary to salvation, must mean something. The Holy Communion must be more than a mere commemoration of Christ's death, when he comes to define a sacrament, that it is a "means whereby we receive inward spiritual grace, and a pledge to assure us thereof." The morning sermon will be a gainer every way by the afternoon catechising. There will be more precision and simplicity in the preacher, and more distinctness of apprehension in the hearers.

The other objection is, that the times are altered, and what might suit in former days will not suit in the nineteenth century. Let me answer in the words of the venerable Archdeacon Bayley, "Do the times then no longer require catechising? Far other is the case. Much of that ignorant impatience of discipline—that ever learning, and never being able to come to the knowledge of the truth—that heartless indifference, which usurps the name of liberality—and that licentiousness of self-will which marks the latter annals,—much of all this, as well as of viciousness of life, and error in religion, is owing to ungroundedness in points of catechism."

Dear brethren, greater comfort we could not have, or greater praise, than that recorded of Eliot, the Apostolic Missionary among the Indians, who was indefatigable in this exercise, that "he left a well principled people behind him."

And now having already trespassed too long upon your time, let me only, in conclusion, entreat your immediate attention to this one point: What chance is there—what possibility is there—of uniformity now, (and without uniformity where are we?) but in the way of simple conformity with the rubric? Of course this is applicable to the whole system of the Church. But it is more particularly my province to day, in connection with our immediate subject, to exhort you to begin at the beginning, with the training of the young. There is a satisfaction in simple

obedience, that nothing else can supply or take away. If in these days we can serve God with a quiet mind, happy are we. For this, there is nothing like an express command, especially if accompanied with an express promise. Then, let others dispute or wrangle as they may, we will keep ourselves quiet, and seek to train up our children in the way in which they should go, trusting that when they are older they shall not depart from it. There may be a constant demand upon us for holy faith, and steady perseverance, and lowly minds, and great industry. But, on the other hand, we shall be sure that we are in the right way. We shall be working on the Church's own plan, according to our bounden duty, "to bring all such as are or shall be committed to our charge, unto that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God, and to that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that there be no place left among them, either for error in religion, or for viciousness in life." At all events we will not miss the seed time.

